

GOLD

By
STEWART
EDWARD
WHITE

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SYNOPSIS

Talbot Ward's challenge to Frank Munroe to a personal encounter to determine whether Munroe is fit to make a trip to California in search of gold is accepted. Munroe gets a hammerlock on Ward and wins the bout.

Arriving at Chagres, Talbot Ward's knowledge of Spanish and his firm treatment of the native boatmen help wonderfully. The party enters a tropical forest.

They reach Gatun, and, after passing through several villages where Ward always diplomatically handles the natives, they arrive in Panama.

Ward forces steamship agent to refund passage money because ship isn't available.

Yank has provided accommodations for all on board a sailing ship. They arrive in San Francisco.

Ward puts it up to each man to get \$20 in one day. Munroe makes \$25 as a laborer. Johnny gambles and gets \$20.

Ward astounds the party by telling how, by shrewd business deals in one day in the Golden City, he accumulated several thousand dollars.

Ward decides that he will not go with the party to the mines, but will stay in San Francisco, where he thinks more gold is to be found.

CHAPTER XIV.

At Hangman's Gulch.

OUR visit to the town we postponed from day to day because we were either too busy or too tired. We thought we could figure out what that crude sort of village would be like. Then on Saturday evening our neighbor with the twinkling eye—whom we called McNally without conviction because he told us to—inform us that there would be a miners' meeting next day and that we would be expected to attend.

Accordingly we visited the town. The street was full of men idling slowly to and fro. All the larger structures were wide open, and from within could be heard the sounds of hurdy-gurdies, loud laughter and noisy talk. At one end of the street a group was organizing a horse race, and toward this, Don Gaspar took his immediate departure. A smaller group surrounded two wrestlers. At one side a jumping match was going on.

The two gambling places and saloons were hard at it. The low rooms were full of smoke and crowded with slowly jostling men. In contrast to the deadly quiet of such places in San Francisco, these were full of noise and hubbub. The men moved restlessly, threw down their little bags of dust impatiently and accepted victory or defeat with very audible comments. The gamblers, dressed in black, pale, sat steady eyed and silent behind their layouts.

It was about 4 o'clock when the meeting was brought to a formal conclusion. The crowd dispersed slowly in different directions and to its different occupations and amusements. We wandered about, all eyes and ears. As yet we had not many acquaintances and could not enter into the intimate bantering life of the old timers. There was enough to interest us, however. A good many were beginning to show the drink. After a long period of hard labor even the most respectable of the miners would have at times strange reactions. That is another tale, however, and on this Sunday the drinking was productive only of considerable noise and boasting. Two old codgers, head to head, were bragging laboriously of their prowess as cooks. A small but interested group egged them on.

Yank and I then thought of going back to camp and began to look around after Johnny, who had disappeared, when McNally rolled up, inviting us to sup with him.

"You don't want to go home yet," he advised us. "Evening's the time to have fun. Never mind your friend. He's all right. Now you realize the



We Found Johnny, Rather Flushed, Bucking a Faro Bank.

disadvantage of living way off where you do. My hangout is just down the street. Let's have a drink."

We accepted both his invitations. Then, after the supper, pipes alight,

we sauntered down the street, a vast leisure expanding our horizons.

We entered the gambling rooms, of which there were two, and had a drink of what McNally called "42 caliber whisky" at the bar of each. In one of them we found Johnny, rather flushed, bucking a faro bank. Yank suggested that he join us, but he shook his head impatiently, and we moved on. In tremendous tents made by joining three or four ordinary tents together a very lively fiddle and concertina were in full blast. We entered and were pounced upon by a boisterous group of laughing men and had to join in the festivities.

At 10 o'clock we were getting tired, and probably the reaction from the "42 caliber whisky" was making us drowsy. We hunted up Johnny, still at his faro game, but he positively and impatiently declined to accompany us. He said he was ahead—or behind, I forget which. I notice both conditions have the same effect of keeping a man from quitting. We therefore left him and wandered home through the soft night, wherein were twinkling stars, gentle breezes, little voices and the silhouettes of great trees.

Johnny did not return at all that night, but showed up next morning at the diggings, looking bleak eyed and sleepy. He told us he had slept with a friend and replied rather curtly that he was a "little behind the game." I believe myself that he was cleaned out, but that was none of our business. Every night we divided the dust into five parts. Don Gaspar and Vasquez got two of these. The remainder we again divided into four. I took charge of Talbot's share. We carried the dust always with us, for the camp was no longer safe from thieves.

About this time the first of the overland wagon trains began to come through. Hangman's Gulch was not on the direct route, but some enterprising individual had found our trail fairly practicable for wagons and ten miles shorter than the regular road. After that many followed, and soon we had a well cleared road. They showed plainly the hardships of a long journey, for the majority of them were thin, sick looking and discouraged. Few of them stopped at the diggings, although most had come west in hopes of gold, but pushed on down to the pastures of the Sacramento. They were about worn out and needed to recuperate before beginning anything new. Some were out of provisions and practically starved. The Yankee storekeeper sold food at terrible rates. I remember that quinine, a drug much in demand, cost a dollar a grain! We used to look up from our diggings at the procession of these sad faced, lean men walking by their emaciated cattle and the women peering from the wagons and be very thankful that we had decided against the much touted overland route.

One day, however, an outfit went through of quite a different character. We were apprised of its approach by a hunter named Bagsby. He loped down the trail to the river level very much in a hurry.

"Boys," he shouted, "quit work! Come see what's coming down the trail!" with which he charged back again up the hill.

His great excitement impressed us, for Bagsby, like most of the old time Rocky mountain men, was not ordinarily what one would call an emotional individual. Therefore we dropped our tools and surged up the hill as fast as we could go. I think we suspected Indians.

A train of three wagons drawn by strong oxen was lurching slowly down the road. It differed little from others of its kind, save that the cattle were in better shape, and the men walking alongside, of the tall, competent backwoodsman type, seemed well and hearty. But perhaps a hundred yards ahead of the leading wagon came a horse, the only horse in the outfit, and on it, riding sidesaddle, was a girl. She was a very pretty red cheeked girl, and she must have stopped within a half mile or so of the camp in order to get herself up for this impressive entrance. Her dress was of blue calico, with a white yoke and heavy flounces or panniers. Around her neck was a black velvet ribbon. On her head was a big leghorn hat with red roses. She rode through the town, her head high, like a princess, and we all cheered her like mad. Not once did she look at us, but I could see her bosom heaving with excitement beneath her calico and her nostrils wide. She was a remarkably pretty girl, and this was certainly the moment of her triumph.

About this time we had to come to some sort of a decision, for our provisions were about exhausted. We had no desire to replenish our stock from that of the local storekeeper. We were doing pretty well in the diggings, but we had also fairly healthy appetites, and I am convinced that at the prices that man charged we should have no more than kept even. Williams, the storekeeper, was levying double profits, one from us and one from the overland immigrants. Don Gaspar proposed we send out Vasquez with all the horses to restock at Sutter's Fort. We were a trifle doubtful as to whether Vasquez would ever come back, but Don Gaspar seemed to have confidence in his man. Finally, though a little doubtfully, we came to the plan. Don Gaspar sent out also to McClellan for safe keeping his accumulations of gold dust, but we did not go quite that far. In view of probable high prices we intrusted him with eighteen ounces for the purchase of goods.

While he was away we came to another decision. It had been for some weeks preparing. The diggings were becoming overcrowded. Almost every foot of the bar was occupied, and more men were coming in every day. No longer could the newcomer be sure of his color the afternoon of his arrival,

but was forced to prospect here and there up and down the river until he found a patch of the pay dirt. Most trusted simply to luck, but some had systems on which they worked. I have seen divining rods used. The believers in chance seemed to do as well as any one else.

But, also, our own yield was decreasing. The last week we had gained only nineteen ounces all told. This might be merely a lean bit of misfortune, or it might mean that we had taken the best from our ten claims. Since the human mind is prone to changes, we inclined to the latter theory. We were getting restless. No miner ever came to California who did not believe firmly that he would have done much better had he come out one voyage earlier, and no miner ever found diggings so rich that he had not a sneaking suspicion that he could do even better "a little farther on."

Our restlessness was further increased by the fact that we were now seeing a good deal of Sam Bagsby, the hunter. He and Yank had found much in common and for gathered of evenings before our campfire.

Bagsby was a man of over fifty, tall and straight as a youngster, with a short white beard, a gray eye and hard, tanned flesh. He was a typical Rocky mountain man, wearing even in the hottest weather his fur cap with the tail hanging behind, his deer skin moccasins and his fringed buckskin hunting shirt. Mining possessed no interest for him whatever. He was by profession a trapper, and he had crossed the plains a half dozen times.

"No mining for me!" he stated emphatically. "I paddled around after the stuff for awhile, till my hands swelled up like p'ison and my back creaked like a frozen pine tree in the wind. Then I quit, and I stayed quit. I'm a hunter, and I'm makin' a good livin', because I ain't very particular on how I live."

He and Yank smoked interminable pipes and swapped yarns. Johnny and I liked nothing better than to keep quiet and listen to them. Bagsby had come out with Captain Sutter and told of that doughty soldier's early skirmishes with the Indians. His tales of the mountains, the plains and the game and Indians were so much romance to

us, and we both wished heartily that fate could have allowed us a chance at such adventures.

"But why don't you fellows branch out?" Bagsby always ended. "What do you want to stick here for like a lot of groundhogs? There's rivers back in the hills a heap better than this one, and nobody there. You'd have the place plumb to yoreselfs. Git in where the mountains is really mountainous."

"If Sam Bagsby would join us it might be worth trying," we came to at last.

But Sam Bagsby scouted any such idea.

"I ain't that kind of a tom fool," said he. "If I want to paddle my hands blue I'd do it yere. I couldn't make more'n a livin' anyway. I tell you I ain't got no use for yore prairie dog grubbin'!"

Then McNally had an inspiration.

"Will you go, Sam, if we pay you for going?" he asked.

"Sure," replied the trapper at once. "I'm a labor man. I'll go anywhere I'm paid to go."

It came out that Bagsby's ideas of proper compensation were his supplies, \$15 a week in gold and a drink of whisky twice a day! In all this gold country he was the only man I met who genuinely despised money. I really think we were hurried to our decision by this unexpected reasonable on his part. At any rate, we decided definitely to go.

There were nine of us—Bagsby, Yank, Johnny Fairfax, myself, Don Gaspar, Vasquez, McNally, Buck Barry and Missouri Jones.

Bagsby got us up long before daylight. The air was chilly, in contrast to the terrific heat to be expected later in the day, so we hastened to finish our packing and at dawn were off.

Until about 3 o'clock we journeyed through a complete solitude; then we came upon some men digging in a dry wash. They had piled up a great heap of dirt from a hole. We stopped and talked to them and discovered that they were working what they called "dry diggings." The pay dirt they excavated from wherever they found it, piled it in a convenient place and there left it until the rains should permit its washing. They claimed their dirt

would prove to be very rich; but I thought myself that they were laboring in great faith. Also we learned what Bagsby had known right along, but which he had not bothered to tell us—that we were now about to cross the main overland trail.

We stopped that night near the read and at a wayside inn or roadhouse of logs kept by a most interesting man. He served us an excellent meal, including real eggs, and afterward joined us around the fire. He was an Italian, short, strongly built, with close curly hair, a rolling, good natured face, and with tiny gold rings in his ears. Johnny and he did most of the talking, while we listened. No part of the civilized world seemed to have been unvisited by this pair. Johnny mentioned Paris. Our host added an intimate detail as to some little street London appeared to be known to them from one end to the other; Berlin, Edinburgh, St. Petersburg even, and a host of other little fellows whose names I never knew before and cannot remember now. They swapped reminiscences of the streets, the restaurants and the waiters and proprietors thereof; the alleys and byways, the parks and little places. I knew in a general way that Johnny had done the grand tour, but the Italian with his gold earrings and his strong, brown, good humored peasant face puzzled me completely. How came he to be so traveled, so intimately traveled? He was no sailor. That I soon determined.

The two of them became thoroughly interested, but after a time the native courtesy of the Italian asserted itself. He evidently thought we might feel left out of it, though I think the others were like myself, quite fascinated. "You like music?" he smiled at us engagingly. "I getta my Italian fiddle? No?"

He arose at our eager assent, pushed aside a blanket that screened off one end of the log cabin and produced his "Italian fiddle"—a hand organ!

At once the solution of the wide wandering among the many cities, the intimate knowledge of streets and of public places burst upon my comprehension. I could see our host looking upward, his strong white teeth flashing in an ingratiating, fascinating

smile, his right arm revolving with the crank of his organ, his little brown monkey with the red coat and the anxious face clambering—

Next morning we crossed the overland trail and plunged into a country of pines, of high hills, of deep canyons and bold, rocky ridges. The open spaces we had left behind and the great heats. Water flowed in almost every ravine, and along its courses grew green grass and wild flowers.

(To be continued.)

What Does Catarrh Mean?

It means inflammation of a mucous membrane somewhere in the head, throat, bronchial tubes, stomach, biliary ducts or bowels. It always means stagnant blood—the blood that is full of impurities. Left alone, it extends until it is followed by indigestion, colds, congestion or fever. It weakens the system generally and spreads its operations until systemic catarrh or an acute illness is the result.

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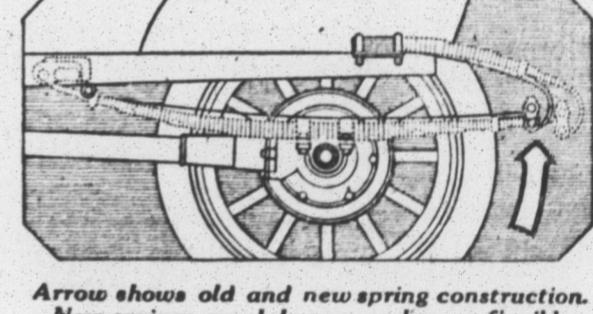
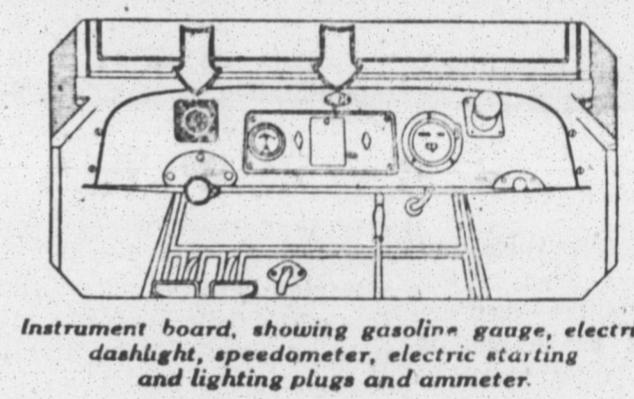
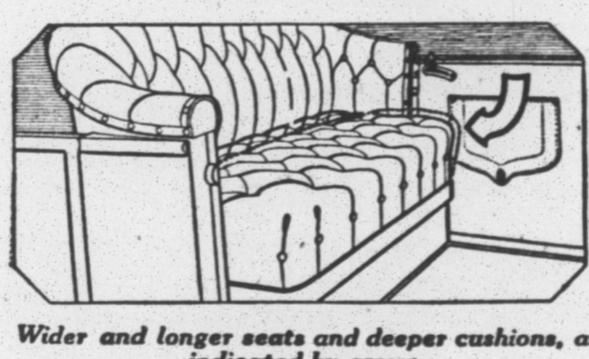
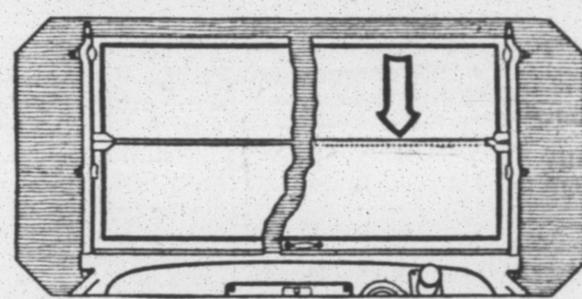
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